

# **Media Skills Training**

**To ensure your “shot”  
downrange hits its “target”**

**Capt. Marisol C. Zammit**  
**Public Affairs Officer**

**“The only good reporter  
is a dead reporter.”**

**“The media is the  
enemy!”**

**PURPOSE OF THIS CLASS IS TO  
FAMILIARIZE YOU WITH THE MEDIA  
AND TO HELP YOU BETTER  
UNDERSTAND YOUR ROLE WHEN YOU  
COME IN CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA**

**"As with our legislative initiatives, our best spokesmen and women are, and will continue to be, individual Marines demonstrating their capabilities and speaking for and about their Corps."**

General C.C. Krulak, USMC ret.

# **Why should you talk to the media?**

- **American public opinion directly influences all levels of warfare.**
- **We have intrinsic value to the Nation and our existence is dependent on the will of the American people.**
- **If we don't tell our story, no one will.**
- **The media will tell the story with or without our input...**

**REMEMBER, WHAT THE PUBLIC  
THINKS DEPENDS ON WHAT THE  
PUBLIC HEARS**

**TELL THEM YOUR STORY**

**Need for timely, accurate  
information**

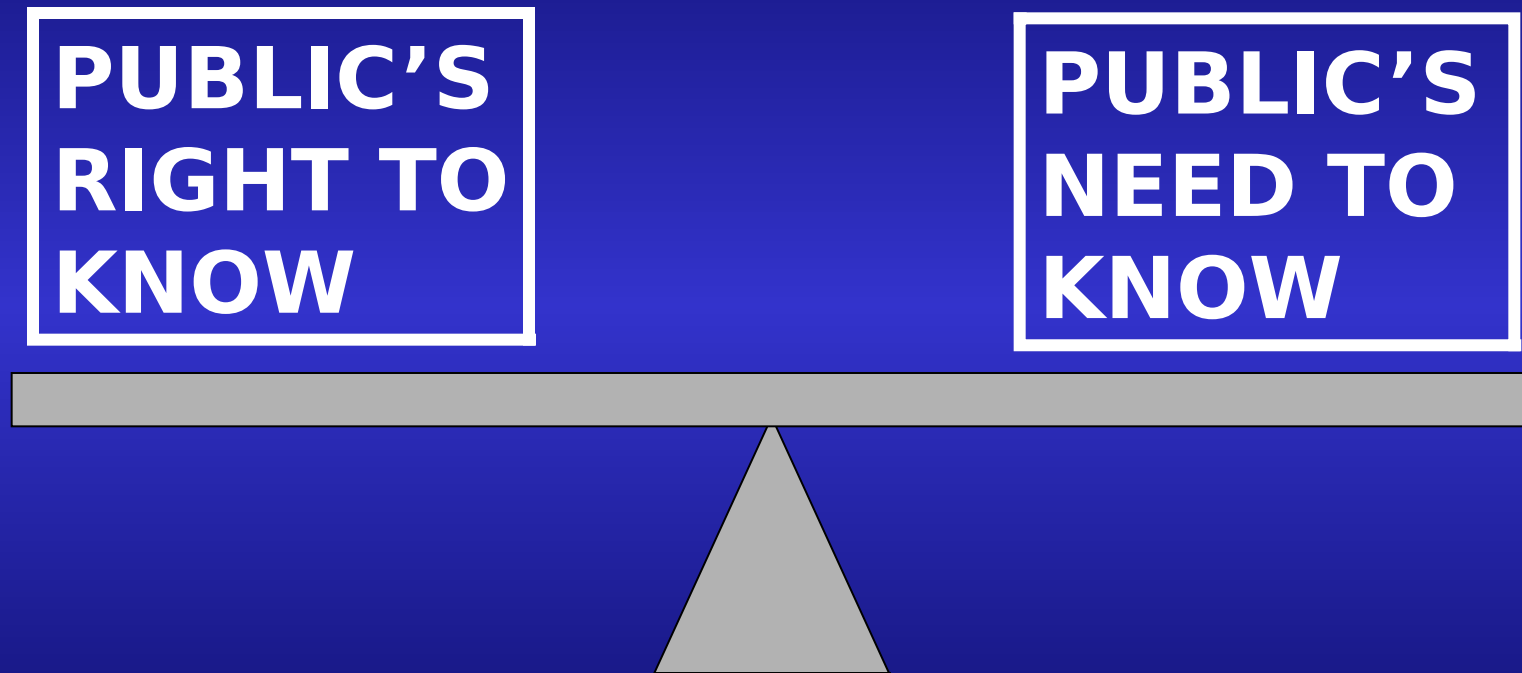
# **DOD Policy**

- **Information to the public – free of bias, censorship or propaganda.**
- **Will not classify to protect government from embarrassment.**
- **Will not release info:**
  - **Matters of national security**
  - **Harm lives and privacy of the service member.**

# **We tell the Marine Corps story to:**

- **Preserve the nation's faith and trust in the Marine Corps.**
- **Good stewardship of taxpayer's dollars.**
- **To uphold our accountability to the American public.**
- **To comply with DoD policy of, "Maximum disclosure with minimum delay."**

# The “Balancing Act”



**Maximum Disclosure, Minimum Delay**  
**Debarity - Accuracy - Propriety - Policy**



# **Media Capability**

- **Civilian technology permits live coverage 24 hours a day without any dependence on military support.**

# **Influence of Mass Media**

- **Satellite/Digital Revolution**
- **Media is independent on the battlefield**
- **24-hour news cycle**

# Impact of Media

## Gulf War:

- “Perception is reality.”

## Post gulf-war:

- 24-hour news cycle
- “No one wins unless CNN says we win.”

# Understanding the media...

## *Limitations*

- Short deadlines
- Inexperienced reporters
- “If it bleeds, it leads.”

## *What sells:*

- Prominence
- Proximity
- Conflict
- Emotion - death
- Oddity
- Sex
- Suspense
- Progress
- Current Trends
- Impact and timeliness

# **Should you engage?**

- **What is the reporter's purpose?**
- **What is my purpose?**
- **What is the reporter's background/reputation?**
- **Consult with your boss & PAO.**
- **Are you the right person?**

# Role of the PAO

- **Advise.**
- **Research.**
- **Interview preparation/rehearsals.**
- **Arrange the interview.**
- **Lay down ground rules.**
- **Act as liaison.**
- **Provide after-action, follow-up.**
- **Play the “bad guy.” (murder board, read-aheads)**

# Types of Interviews

- **OPPORTUNITY** (“door stop” or “on the fly”)
- **GENERAL** - arranged.
- **ACCIDENT, INCIDENT, CRISIS or CONTINGENCY.**

# **The Bottom Line...**

- **It's the right thing to do.**
- **We have to.**

## **Tell the Marine Corps' story**

**Remember: What you say or do  
could have an impact on the world**



**“You can save the  
world; but if no one  
hears about it, it didn’t  
happen.”**

**“Share your courage  
with the world.”**

# Remember:

- The media is not the enemy.
- Media will be in theater during any major operation, usually before us.
- In order to ensure that our actions are accurately presented and portrayed in a positive way, we must establish a sound relationship with the media.

# Questions to Expect

- Who's in charge?
- Where are you from?
- What's your job?
- What's your mission?
- What's your unit?
- How long will you stay?
- What do you hope to accomplish?

**Beware, they're not always that easy.**

# IMMEDIATE ACTION!

- Decide if you are the right person to talk to the media. If not, find your SNCO, Commander or PAO.
- Every Marine is a rifleman, but **every Marine is also a Marine Corps spokesperson.**

# MajGen. Mattis' 3 rules for talking to the media:

from 1<sup>st</sup> MarDiv brief before OIF

## **Rule No. 1:**

No wimps in front of the camera.

## **Rule No. 2:**

Know your job and your  
mission!

(But don't spill the beans about  
ongoing or future missions.)

## **Rule No. 3:**

The media is:  
No better friend, no worse  
enemy!

# General PA Guidance

- Media coverage is on a non-interference basis
- No media should be unescorted – direct to nearest PA rep
- Don't simply avoid the media – be professional and courteous in directing them to the PAO
- YOU are the Marine Corps when doing an interview
- Be brief and concise; 15-30 second sound bites
- Relax, be yourself and remain composed

BOWLING:

Stay in your lane!!!



# ALPHABET SOUP:

Avoid acronyms and  
jargon!!!

JAMES DEAN:

Always keep your cool!!!

MUHAMMED ALI:

Lead with a punch!!!

007:

Know what is and isn't  
OPSEC!!!

SEA STORIES:

Tell the truth!!!

PLEAD THE FIFTH:

It's OK to say you don't  
know!!!

WASHINGTON POST:

If you don't want to read  
about it, don't say it!!!

# Keep In Mind

- **Mission, Intent, Endstate**
- **Sound/Video bites**
- **Body language**
- **Nothing is “off the record.”**
- **What’s releasable?**
- **You are in control.**
- **Forget the camera, and talk to the reporter.**



# Engaging the Media

# **Communication Objective**

- **What are your COMMAND MESSAGES?**
- **Create a message geared to the reporter's audience.**
- **Mission, Intent, Endstate.**

# **Components of Effective Messages**

- **Contains Comm. Objective**
- **Puts your most important messages up front.**
- **Clear, concise and to the point (15-20 second sound bites)**
- **Has a “people perspective”**
- **Avoids color words like “catastrophe, slaughtered, etc...”**
- **Avoids negative words.**
- **Accentuates the positive.**

# **“On The Record”**

- **“On the Record”**
- **“Off the Record” - printable but not for attribution.**
- **“Background” - facts not attributable to an official source.**
- **“Deep Background” -not for attribution/not printable.**

# DOs and DON'Ts

- Agree to do the interview
- Be friendly, assertive and positive
- Discuss only what you know or have responsibility over – stay in your lane
- Do not discuss political or foreign policy matters
- Do not discuss operational capabilities or future plans
- Don't speculate or render opinions on real or hypothetical situations
- Never say, “no comment.” (hiding something)
- Never lie or stretch the truth
- Don't answer questions with just a “yes” or “no”

## **DOs and DON'Ts (cont.)**

- If you don't know the answer, say so
- Use laymen's terms; Avoiding jargon and acronyms
- Always look at the interviewer and not the camera
- Avoid embarrassment – discredit to Corps
- Take time to analyze the question and formulate an answer before speaking
- Avoid repeating negative, sensitive or controversial words - scandal, death, dangerous, horrible; media will use them
- If you say something inappropriate, incorrect or sensitive, ask the interviewer to stop and disregard
- Control the interview and convey positive

# Control the interview - don't be controlled

- **BRIDGING** – focus on main points, and don't allow tangents
- **BUNDLING/PACKAGING** – up front and factual, importance, tie-ins to focus
- **HOOKING** – baits reporter to ask questions about which you want to talk
- **FLAGGING** – Nonverbals to lead to a point

# Springing the traps

- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer–active listening
- DEAD AIR – a pregnant pause which usually follows a tough question – you don't need to fill it. Say what you have to say and stop. Have a command message ready.



# Springing the Traps

## (cont)

- If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.
- Assume the mike/camera is always HOT (on).
- Avoid impromptu remarks – don't drop your guard.
  - “For the price of a rental car they could have had a prostitute...”

# Springing the Traps

## (cont)

- **INTERRUPTIONS -**
- **1<sup>st</sup> Time - ignore**
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Time - Say, “Let me finish...”**
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Time - Say, “Please don’t be rude and let me answer...”**
- **Don’t get angry.**

# **Springing the Traps (cont)**

- **OFF TOPIC - stick to objective / ground rules.**
- **EDITORIALIZING - reporter making commentary that supports their bias.**
  - **Don't become argumentative**
  - **“What exactly is your question?”**
  - **Bridge to Command Message.**

# Basic On-Air Tips

- **Uniform** – check your appearance.
- **Eyewear** – allow viewers to see your eyes (sunglasses are a “no-no”).
- **Camera angle** – slight angle.
- **Guard your flanks** – never be in the middle of two interviewers.

# **Basic On-Air Tips (cont)**

- **Don't slouch or rock back and forth.**
- **Microphone – get wired.**
- **Relax and be yourself.**
- **Don't let your guard down – never get too comfortable or friendly.**

# Basic Field Tips

- **Take off your helmet or cover** – let the viewers see your eyes.
- **Check background for sensitive or classified items.**
- **Know your subject.**
- **Check current news – if possible.**
- **Anticipate questions, formulate responses.**

# **\* Command Themes \***

- **Core Values**
- **Stability and Security Operations**
- **Discipline, honor, loyalty**
- **Leadership in the Marine Corps is the strongest its been**
- **Corps has been founded on solid leadership and the notion to take action and succeed**
- **Training to assist the Iraqi forces to rebuild their nation and take control of their own destiny**

# Themes (cont)

- Moral Component important – **values, ethos, attitude and culture.**
- **Iraqi ownership** – what we do now is foundation for future success.



**Leadership  
sets the  
example**

**QUESTIONS???**